

Our Community and the Environment

Often the solutions to environmental concerns can best be found in your own community. To find those solutions, you can identify the departments and people who handle environmental matters by conducting an “Environmental Inventory” of your community. In large cities and towns, local governments often have a directory of agencies, departments and companies that specialize in the environment. Small counties and towns usually have centralized environmental offices. You can also use the blue (government) pages in your phone book and the Internet.

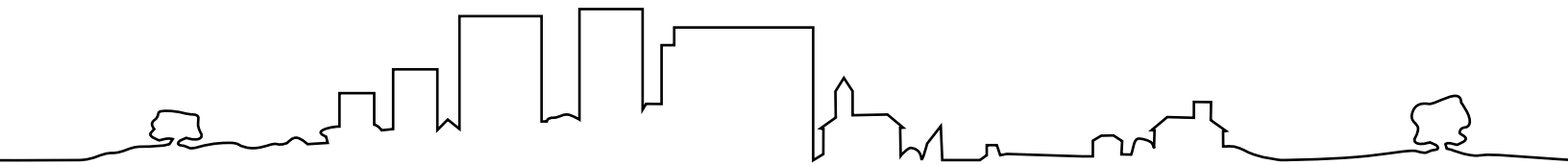
City/County: _____ Website: _____

Service/Department	Responsible Person	What They Do	Phone Number and E-mail
Emergency Response			_____
Health			_____
Parks and Recreation			_____
Planning and Zoning			_____
Public Safety			_____
Sewer			_____
Solid Waste			_____
Water			_____

Places to Visit

There are also many facilities and places in your community that help you learn about and address environmental concerns. Find out what each of the following do, and if you have them, where they are located:

Site	Organization Name	What It Offers	Address	Phone Number
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				



Environmental Professionals in Your Community

There are many state, federal, public and private agencies and businesses that deal with environmental issues. Check the phone book or the Internet for local government offices to find out what these environmental professionals do:

Profession	Name	What They Do	Agency/Organization Name	Phone Number and E-mail
Environmental Engineer				— — — — —
Extension Agent				— — — — —
Forester				— — — — —
Game Warden				— — — — —
Recycling Director				— — — — —
Litter Prevention Coordinator				— — — — —
Soil/Water Conservation Technician				— — — — —
Park Ranger				— — — — —
Sanitation/Health Officer				— — — — —
Prevention/EMS Coordinator				— — — — —
Biologist				— — — — —
Hydrologist				— — — — —
Planner				— — — — —
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Environmental Detectives Get the Facts

To be an "Environmental Detective," talk to the professionals you have identified and find out the answers to these questions about our natural resources ...

Air

- What air quality problems does your community have? (Be specific)

Food

- How many people in your community do you know who grow some of their own food? What foods do they grow?
- Does your community have community gardens for people who don't have their own land for growing food? Where are they?
- How much of your local farmland is protected from non-agricultural uses?

Home

- Make a list of poisonous chemicals found around your home (including cleaners, solvents, pesticides, paints, fuel, etc.) What do you do with used or leftover chemicals?
- Does your family have a compost pile?
- What do you do with grass clippings, leaves and tree trimmings?
- Does your family recycle? What?
- Does your family use yard and garden chemicals wisely?
- Do you recycle used motor oil?
- Do you have bird feeders, bird houses, brush piles, hedges, wildlife-attracting flowers, etc.?
- Does your family cat wear a bell to protect song birds?
- How many cars does your family own? Do you car pool?
- List at least five things your family can do to help improve the environment.

Land

- Make a list of all the parks and large green spaces in your community.
- Name ten common plants and animals that live in these parks and green spaces.
- Does your community have a planning department and a citizen's board?
- Does your community have a local comprehensive plan that identifies areas to protect? If so, what are the areas, why were they chosen and how will they be protected?

Recycling and Waste Management

- Where does the garbage go in your community?
- Does your community collect recyclable materials? What is recycled? What is not?
- What happens to un-recycled garbage in your community? Does it go to a sanitary landfill, materials recovery facility or an incinerator or waste-to-energy plant? Does it go to a safe landfill or landfill with leaching problems? Is it taken to another community?

Sewage and Waste Water

- What happens to the sewage from your home? Where does it go when you flush your toilet?
- What should you *not* flush down toilets?
- What should you *not* pour down sinks?
- How is your sewage treated? Where is your sewage treatment plant or septic field located?
- How many gallons are treated each day?
- What is done with the treated water?
What is done with the sludge?
- How much does your community charge residents for waste water treatment?

Water

- What is the average yearly rainfall in your community?
- What watershed do you live in?
- What is the source of your drinking water?
- Where is your water filtration plant or well located?
- Is your drinking water treated? How and why?
- Has your community ever experienced a drought or flood? When was the last one?
- How many people are served by the water supply system and how many gallons are used each day? Divide the total number of gallons per day by the number of people served to equal the amount of water used per person per day.
- How much does your community charge for water?
- How much does water cost you each day?
- What can you do to conserve water? Why should you conserve water?

Wildlife

- Does your community have a wildlife management area? What does it do to benefit and protect wildlife?
- What game and non-game animal species can be found in your community?
- Does your community provide improved habitat or food and shelter for migratory song birds?
- Does your community have any wildlife problems? (i.e., too many deer, not enough quail or ducks, unwanted species, etc.) What is being done to correct the situation?
- Do land developers in your community include wildlife habitat protection as part of their development plans?
- Does your community have any pollution problems that may affect wildlife? What are they?
- Make a list of things that you and your friends can do to benefit wildlife.

List in order of importance your community's most important environmental challenges and proposed solutions.